

Book Reviews

***Michel Tremblay.* By Renate Usmiani. Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1982. Pp. 177. \$5.95.**

Renate Usmiani's long-awaited study is very important because it represents the first synthesis of Tremblay's work since Michel Bélair's publication in 1972. Like the majority of Québécois critics, Bélair concentrates on the socio-political implications of a world populated with individuals from the fringes of society who speak in a vernacular, itself seen as a symbol of colonization and cultural impoverishment. Usmiani, on the other hand, gives a far-reaching and penetrating analysis of both the form and the content of Tremblay's entire dramatic production as it existed in 1979. Unfortunately her manuscript appears to have lingered with the publisher for over three years: two recent plays and three novels are thus not covered.

Her study is based on a detailed examination of the texts but with a keen sensitivity to the theatrical traditions of Greece, France and America which so influenced Michel Tremblay. Usmiani begins by placing Tremblay within the development of theatre in Quebec, comparing him more particularly with his two most famous predecessors: Gratien Gélinas and Michel Dubé. Having published the only monograph on Gélinas (Gage Educational Publishing Ltd., 1977), she fully appreciates the evolution of the dramatic form in Quebec. When referring to the lesser known playwrights such as Robert Gurik and Françoise Loranger, Usmiani stresses that Tremblay goes far beyond their "technically ingenious but intellectually uncomplicated political theatre". Throughout her study she demonstrates very convincingly how Tremblay creates a brilliant synthesis from very different sources, both new and traditional. In this regard, her analyses of *Les Belles-Soeurs* and *Sainte Carmen de la Main* are most successful. She brings to light Tremblay's extraordinary capacity to integrate absurdist themes and situations with both "slice of life" regionalism and Greek tragedy. She shows how he exploits various theatrical devices, such as stylized monologues and choral recitations, to transcend the crude reality of the moment—be it a kitchen or a seedy night-club.

Les Belles-Soeurs, *Sainte Carmen de la Main* and *Damnée Manon Sacrée Sandra* constitute the main articulations of Usmiani's study. She

devotes an entire chapter to each of these plays which serve as the leading examples of the three different cycles into which she divides the Tremblay opus. Borrowing his spatial metaphors, she refers to these cycles as "Rue Fabre", "The Main" and "The Great Beyond". The other plays, musical comedies and short stories, are grouped and studied according to the thematic cycle into which they are placed. Tremblay's films, adaptations and translations are mentioned in the bibliography, but are not examined in detail.

The "Rue Fabre" encompasses the problems related to domesticity, to the frustrations brought on by the lack of communication in an impoverished and oppressive environment. Usmiani concentrates on the psychological conflicts and the formal structures of the various plays, although the sociological dimension of Tremblay's vision is made quite apparent, especially in the section devoted to the cycle on "The Main".

The grotesque world of the "Main" is populated with prostitutes and homosexuals, the most renowned and extraordinary of these being the transvestites, Hosanna and the Duchess of Langeais. Usmiani describes the transvestite as the "central symbol of alienation and an embodiment of the crisis of identity". She brings out in her examination of the plays in his cycle the tensions between illusion and reality, loss of identity and search for identity - tensions and conflicts which render the world of the "Main" just as unbearable and unalterable as the familiar world of "Rue Fabre".

Manon (sister of Carmen, the yodelling queen on the main drag) constitutes the principal character in the final cycle called "The Great Beyond". Manon seeks liberation not through the path of sensuality like the people that frequent the "Main", but through religious fanaticism. The fundamental dichotomy which Usmiani sees throughout Tremblay's work is very explicit in *Damnée Manon Sacrée Sandra*. According to Tremblay, religion and sex are both inventions stemming from man's need for an absolute. Thus the spinster and the transvestite, who both seek the "Great Beyond" through mysticism, discover in the final moments of their respective monologues that they are mere inventions of the young Michel. As Usmiani points out, this juxtaposition of sensualism and mysticism is not uncommon in the literature of Quebec. She further underlines Tremblay's mystic tendencies in her concluding chapter in which she examines briefly four early minor works.

Usmiani offers a highly structured and logical critique of Quebec's most renowned and brilliant playwright. Throughout her study she brings to light the unity and diversity of a world of interrelated and reappearing characters, and demonstrates very convincingly Michel Tremblay's formal and verbal originality.

The Ottawa Men: The Civil Service Mandarins: 1935-1957. By J. L. Granatstein. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1982. Pp. xiv, 333. \$24.95. Paper, \$14.95.

This book does not pretend to be about government in this over-governed country, but it conveys more of how Canada was, and to some extent still is run than many of the conventional texts on the subject. Moreover, it is entertaining. To anyone familiar with the Ottawa of the period it is almost titillating. It is also bound to revive some perennial arguments on the proper role of public servants and even open up for reappraisal the significance and destiny of the Canadian phenomenon. The temptation to get one's licks in early is irresistible.

The period 1935 to 1957 was one of modest greatness for this country, as it was also a period of promise not to be fulfilled. Some of the reasons for both are set down in this book, probably for the first time in one place. It will undoubtedly have many intellectual offspring as assessments of this fascinating period are subjected to reconsideration and revision.

As Professor Granatstein recognizes, there is bound to be some disagreement over his selection of the principal players from a surprisingly rich cast of characters, and although his selection is indeed open to debate, it would have to be about marginal parts or priorities on the playbill. All the central players are there and more or less in their proper places. Some of the author's characterizations are superb in that they confirm biases; others are a trifle puzzling in that they present some unsuspected side-lights on familiar figures. But all of them are of people who are themselves interesting and three-dimensional.

The book wisely avoids attempting to produce a model mandarin—a term, incidentally, none of them would ever have applied to themselves. Nevertheless it shows that there was a clear pattern for membership in the caste in spite of the outstanding exceptions. The author describes the members as “generalists” and in the sense in which he uses the term (that of a well-rounded human being) he is correct. At the same time, the overwhelming majority of the people mentioned were economic specialists, relatively rare birds in the 1930s and 40's. The origin of Canada's reputation as an international negotiator was the specialist expertise that these people were able to bring to bear in international trade talks. Their performance led American businessmen to complain to their own negotiators that our men regularly took them to the cleaners.

The identifying characteristic of the breed was that virtually all of them combined with their specialist expertise a broad interest in human affairs that lay well outside their own fields. Just to clinch the point there is the case of Douglas LePan, one of Canada's most important poets who found himself doing economic reporting from the High Commissioner's Office in London and was later head of External Affairs' Economic Division. He was said to have had no economic training but his command of English was such that he could discuss and write about economic matters more effectively than the economists.

Another part of the mandarin pattern had to do with their places of origin and the universities they attended. No less than 13 of the 19 persons specifically mentioned were either born or educated in Ontario and anglophone Quebec. None came from Alberta or Saskatchewan and only one from any of the Atlantic provinces. A surprisingly large proportion had been at Oxford, Cambridge or the London School of Economics.

The conclusion can and has been drawn that the mandarin was a cosy coterie of friends, and friends of friends, in spite of some attempts to anticipate this criticism. But that was as it had to be considering the small numbers of people being hired and the consequent importance of knowing in advance that each new recruit would be able to pull his full weight. As recruitment expanded, specifically in the Department of External Affairs, there was better representation from the different parts of the country and from the different elements within it. But in the early post-war years those who did not conform to the pattern were convinced that the key to success in Ottawa was to come from Ontario, go to a private school, attend Toronto or Queen's University and have a year or two at Oxbridge.

Few women reached "officer" rank in the Public Service and none approached mandarin status, but Ottawa was full of women without whom External Affairs at any rate could not have functioned even as inefficiently as it did. Things managed to get done very largely through the efforts of dedicated, worldly and wise women occupying central positions as administrators, clerks and librarians. Their influence was exerted well outside the areas indicated by their job descriptions. The chiefest of these would be the secretaries of the mandarins where their knowledge of the issues and their sense of priorities compensated for the systematic vacuum in which their masters frequently preferred to operate.

Of all the weaknesses of the system none equalled the absence of any significant French Canadian involvement with the mandarin, to which Professor Granatstein has pointed with dismay. With the benefit of hindsight we can now see why this Golden Age turned out to be 14 rather than 24-karat; the mandarins did not understand Quebec and tended to take it for granted. This has led to the mandarin's being replaced by the politicized bureaucrat. The politicians of the time unaccountably failed to see that the political realities concerning Quebec were taken into account, while the mandarins almost studiously avoided probing beneath the surface of French Canada in the way they did in so many other areas of national life.

The book inevitably revives the debate on whether the Public Service became Liberal in the partisan sense or whether the Liberal party simply absorbed the views of the mandarins. There certainly was a flow of ideas between the political master and his expert servant and at times it was more from the servant to the master than the other way around. But one of the characteristics of those heady times was that the flow of political, cultural and social ideas was not confined to mandarin and politician.

There was, for instance, a large circle of academics who moved in and out of government service and whose opinions and advice were sought after. Dalhousie's Professor R. A. MacKay is a good example, but virtually every university of any size in Canada had its members in this Establishment. There were also journalists who were widely read and consulted for their opinions as well as for what they chose to report upon. Names like Fraser, Dexter, Hutchison, Friedman, Fergusson and Norman Smith come immediately to mind.

The operation of this intellectual ferment could best be seen at the annual gatherings of the Learned Societies, particularly the meetings of the Canadian Institute for International Affairs. All these "estates", including politicians and mandarins (whose cadet members were there as note-takers) engaged in a virtual non-stop seminar on every aspect of national life. The atmosphere in the hotel rooms, convention halls and restaurants was heavy with ideas. Participants were convinced that they were taking part in something important and took back to their own parts of Canada feelings about the country that made them believe they were about to be a part of a Golden Age.

Although the mandarin may have lost its pre-eminent position with the arrival of Mr. Diefenbaker, as Professor Granatstein says, this feeling about the country persisted. Indeed the dreams acquired a new lease on life with Mr. Diefenbaker's call for a Northern Vision and with the wave of apparent national unity that brought him to power. The mood persisted long after the basis for it had disappeared and by 1967 Canadian self-confidence had reached its apex and had begun its decline.

The surviving mandarins of yesteryear are inclined to wonder if all their bright hopes were in vain and the remarkable things they did were ephemeral. To acknowledge that the advances they set in train have been neither continuous nor, in every case, lasting, is in no sense a denial of the enduring value of what they did. Canada has never returned to the backwater from which it emerged in the early 40's, even if it has not gone on to fulfill the dreams of the smoke-filled rooms of the Learned Societies. Optimists can find reasons for thinking we have merely gone back to pick up some very important passengers who were left on the dock when Ottawa set out on its new course in the early post-war years. There are reasons for hoping that after the Trudeau corrective has been absorbed and done its work in the body politic, there can be a renewal of the community of thought and action without which Canada will barely be able to survive let alone prosper as the mandarins would have had us. The elements are all present this time; powerful francophone politicians and public servants in Ottawa and generous-minded and outward-looking academics, publicists and politicians throughout the country. No one can say if they will transmute by themselves, if there is an alchemist hidden in our midst who can bring the elements together, or if the introspective and short-sighted will have their separatist ways. Professor Granatstein's book has shown what The Ottawa Men of forty years ago were able to

accomplish, working with only a fraction of the country while it was emerging from a depression, fighting a war and playing no mean part in rebuilding a shattered world. With the politicians who retained and sustained them, they were very impressive, not only for what they did but for what they can tell us about ourselves.

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Arthur Andrew

***Woodrow Wilson: A Medical And Psychological Biography.* By Dr. Edwein A. Weinstein. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981. 399 p. \$18.50 U.S.**

That a medical and psychological biography of Woodrow Wilson has been written comes as little surprise in light of the continuing intrigue surrounding the relationship between Wilson's devastating stroke in the Fall of 1919, his behaviour following the stroke, and the ultimate failure of the United States to ratify the Versailles Treaty and enter the League of Nations. This book, authored by a medical doctor, provides a detailed history of Wilson's physical and mental state through a close study of the letters and papers of Wilson and the comments made in published and unpublished memoirs. The author's pursuit of material appears to have been exhaustive, although the book is largely interpretative, since few of Wilson's medical records have survived. Also, any historical medical or psychological study is severely restrained by the writer's lack of personal access to the patient. The acknowledged drawbacks notwithstanding, Weinstein has constructed a readable analysis and description of Wilson's various illnesses.

The author persuasively presents the opinion that as a child Wilson suffered from dyslexia, that he suffered from a progressive cerebral vascular disease during his adult life, and from numerous strokes of differing severity prior to the 1919 incapacitating stroke. Weinstein looks in depth at Wilson's relationship with his parents, his views and close friends in order to draw out Wilson's psychological motivations. He attributes many Wilsonian actions to the relieving of guilt, such as the alleged guilt Wilson felt over his "contemptible error and madness of a few months" with Mrs. Mary Allen Hulbert Peck during Wilson's first marriage. In this realm, as well as in the comments on Wilson's psychosomatic complaints, the book is less persuasive, but always interesting and provocative.

Most biographers of Wilson stress the religious aspects of his character. Weinstein, while not dismissing the influence of religion on his patient's psyche, reserves only limited comment early in the book and makes little mention of it during Wilson's political days. Similarly, changing cultural mores that must have influenced Wilson, are only referenced incidentally. The scope of the work does not include looking at this type of problem but

focuses only upon illness and close personal relationships and their consequent effect on action and thinking. Unfortunately, overlooking such factors reduces the persuasiveness of some of the explanations of Wilson's psychological state and alleged consequent actions.

The important underpinning of most of Weinstein's presentation is the importance to be given to Wilson's use of words, phrases and references to his health. For instance, the author assigns considerable significance to the fact that prior to the "madness of a few months" with Mrs. Peck, one of Wilson's favorite speech references was to the three colours in the American flag, and his noting that white stood for purity. After the "few months" and before confessing the "madness" to his second wife, such references to the colour white were missing only to reappear after the letter confessing his "madness" to his second wife. Undoubtedly Wilson did feel guilt about his association with Mrs. Peck and Weinstein has discovered an interesting manifestation of this guilt. A less persuasive example occurs when Weinstein suggests that a pun indicated the possibility that Wilson believed he had had a stroke. For some readers such instances might indicate an over-importance given to trivial comments and events.

Weinstein argues that by 1918 President Wilson's cerebral disease and the stress of office were sufficient to cause him to become defensive, suspicious, secretive, absent-minded and to have influenced his judgement-making capability. At the Paris Peace Conference, further illness influenced Wilson's abilities to negotiate and to compromise. Arthur S. Link, the leading expert on Wilson, has stated that the stroke suffered in the Fall of 1919 destroyed Wilson's "emotional constitution and aggravated all his more unfortunate personal traits."¹ Weinstein's view is that Wilson's personality had been altering since 1918 and the 1919 stroke was not the turning point suggested by Link. The author is clear that the 1919 stroke was severely debilitating, but does not enter the debate as to whether Wilson was incapacitated to the extent that the Vice-President should assume the Presidency.

One might have hoped for a lengthier discussion of the 1918-1920 period and the author's opinions on the influence of Wilson's illnesses on the negotiation in Paris and the subsequent failure of the Senate to ratify the Peace Treaty, but such a discussion appears to have been beyond the intended scope of the book. Weinstein does, however, opine "that the cerebral dysfunction which resulted from Wilson's devastating strokes prevented the ratification of the Treaty" (p. 363), which is the same opinion reached by one other scholar who specifically examined the influence of Wilson's illness on the Senate defeat.²

This book is an interesting addition to the growing literature on Wilson and the Wilsonian era which, despite its occasional narrow scope and at times unconvincing interpretation of events, will be required reading for Wilsonian scholars.

NOTES

1. Arthur S. Link. *Woodrow Wilson: Revolution, War, and Peace* (Arlington Heights, Illinois: AHM Publishing Corporation, 1979), at p. 121.
2. Perry Laukhuff, "The Price of Woodrow Wilson's Illness" (1956), 32 *Virginia Quarterly Review* 598-610.

***Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England.* By Katherine M. Rogers. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982. Pp. 291. \$18.95.**

An examination of aspects of "feminist consciousness" in the writings of a number of authors from Defoe to Wollstonecraft, this book is the work of a well-read scholar. Professor Rogers has delved deeply into the literature of the period and has provided a useful, thematic survey. The book is balanced in its inclusion of both male and female authors representing a wide range of political and/or philosophical beliefs. Professor Rogers' careful thought and consideration of the subject are evident and may be illustrated by her excellent presentation of a fundamental paradox which she underlines: much "radical" theory was based on and influenced by conservative mores while many apparently conservative theories were actually quite "radical." There is also a useful series of biographical sketches of 110 women writers.

This information whets the appetite and the reader wishes for more complete bibliographical entries. It would be convenient to know the publication details for the significant works by these authors. A bibliography for the entire book would be useful as well. Its inclusion might dispel the impression that very few secondary sources were employed. There is much recent criticism of excellent quality in the field which should be brought to the reader's attention.

The chapters in the book follow a traditional, chronological order. The analysis is essentially a discussion of selected characteristics of "feminism" expressed in the literary works of authors from Swift to Wollstonecraft. The advantage of this survey is its breadth. The disadvantages are that it is an essentially superficial catalogue. While some 110 women writers are listed in the index and while we know little of many of them, this book does not add significantly to our knowledge of the lesser-known of these authors. Some 47 are mentioned uniquely in the appendix and another 10 are mentioned but in passing elsewhere in the book. The methodology in the book is not apparent. The reader does not have a definition of feminism, a complete list of the characteristics discussed, or an understanding of why certain authors were selected for inclusion and others

omitted. All of those in the index wrote a "significant" work. One might ask: what is significant? The book is disappointing in that it tends to generalizations which are not illustrated or proven (such as: few women achievers had strong, beloved mothers); it deals with literature not with society; and it includes a very large number of discussions of women in literature which focus uniquely on women's role: heroine, authority figure, etc. One would hope for more analysis and less recounting of plot lines. Finally there are a fair number of typos and grammatical errors such as split infinitives.

The book provides a useful introduction to the subject and makes one wish for more. The widely-read author is highly qualified to satisfy the curiosity she has aroused and her next book is awaited with pleasure.

Dalhousie University

Roseann Runte

***Benjamin Disraeli: Letters, Vol. I: 1815-1834, Vol. II: 1835-1837.* Edited by J. A. W. Gunn, John Matthews, Donald M. Schurman and M. G. Wiebe. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982. Pp. lxxviii + 482, xliii +. \$50 each volume.**

Among letter-writing prime ministers of Britain, Disraeli emerges as one of the most prolific and polished epistlers, rivalling an inveterate scribbler like Asquith, especially when it came to unburdening himself to women with unbuttoned frankness. Now for the first time Disraeli's epistolary outpouring of a lifetime, more than ten thousand letters, many of them previously unpublished, is being assembled in a full, authoritative edition by a team of Canadian scholars. The first two volumes in this ambitious enterprise have now appeared, handsomely produced and discerningly annotated. The 700 entries provide hours of entertaining reading, though they shed little new light on Disraeli's early years, beyond the discovery of a hitherto unknown novel written pseudonymously with his sister.

Together these volumes cover the years 1815 to 1837, from Disraeli's school days to his belated entry into parliament, at the seventh attempt, as a tory under the patronage of Lord Lyndhurst. Family letters bulk large in this collection, especially those addressed to his sister Sarah, who performed the vital role of female confidant in Disraeli's early manhood, a part played by a procession of sympathetic ladies over the ensuing years, culminating with Queen Victoria herself when Dizzy became prime minister. For his sister's amusement he employed his exceptional powers of acute observation and graphic description, regaling her with sparkling accounts of his tours on the Continent and to the Mediterranean in 1830, which brought the sights, sounds, and fascination of foreign lands vividly to life. With his health recruited, his imagination enthralled by the exoticism of the Near East, and his ambition reinforced by a heightened

consciousness of personal destiny, Disraeli returned to London in 1831 bent on social-climbing in the most unashamedly single-minded fashion. Thereafter his letters to Sarah, portraying the upper classes at play, recount gossip and anecdotes galore mocking the social and literary charivari of the day.

Letters to acquaintances and strangers reveal other facets of Disraeli's mercurial personality and epistolary talents. He develops a nice line in dunning letters, even borrowing money from his tailor. He conducts fevered, disingenuous negotiations with publishers as he churns out hack-work for Grub Street and his early novels from *Vivian Grey* to *Venetia* appear. Politics figure with increasing prominence in his life and letters by the 'thirties.' He craves a winnable parliamentary seat, professing radicalism at Wycombe and toryism at Maidstone, with a fine contempt for consistency and a greater calculated opportunism than his present editors will allow. His all-consuming ambition to shine dazzlingly in the fashionable world, whether as social gad-fly, man of letters, or rising politician, was pursued with severe financial difficulties constantly threatening to engulf him. His sanguine money-spinning adventures turned sour and stock-exchange gambles failed, so that by 1837 only luck seems to have kept him out of the debtors' prison. In everything he did, he was an impetuous young man in a hurry, utterly self-confident and self-centred, undisciplined and uninhibited. With his theatrical gestures, overheated imagination, and wild conceits, he saw himself as a Byronic hero with a destiny to fulfil. What that destiny would be was not yet clear in 1837. Contemporaries found him a fascinating enigma, a puzzle which later volumes of correspondence may help to resolve as well as illuminate.

Dalhousie University

Peter Burroughs

Medieval Manuscripts for Mass and Office: A Guide to their Organisation and Terminology. By Andrew Hughes. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982. Pp. xxxiv, 470. \$47.50.

The binding of this book is an immediate attraction; its contents are at first sight somewhat forbidding. Liturgical scholarship is undeniably hard going for those who are not dedicated liturgists. Certainly one cannot recommend reading this volume at a sitting. Its difficulty is enhanced by the use of 'Algebraic' formulas and a lengthy series of symbols and abbreviations. However necessary these may be in the interests of brevity and for the reader's comparison of the order and content of manuscripts, they do demand of the reader a substantial initial effort and a continuing vigilance.

From the author's point of view, and that of fellow liturgists, it is chapter six which launches the important part of the book, that devoted to

'the organisation, format and structure of the liturgical manuscript'. It is here that a somewhat unexpected extraneous difficulty makes its appearance—the fact that in North America study of liturgical manuscripts perforce relies heavily on 'black and white' microfilm, rather than on colour film, or better still, the originals. As colour is an essential element in the critical examination of the form of liturgical texts this is a great disadvantage and makes additional demands upon the author's powers of exposition.

Throughout the approach is didactic, sometimes too obviously so, particularly when the author makes elementary observations about the use of Latin and the difficulties in store for a liturgical student—not to mention his strictures on editors of texts, just though these may be. Indeed, much of the introductory portion of the book serves to remind us of the extent to which material that at one time would have been familiar to churchgoers of Catholic or High Anglican persuasion has now to be diligently learned. The problem recalls that encountered when dealing with the symbolism of medieval sculpture, painting or literature.

Since the author rightly emphasises that the medieval year was attuned to the church's festivals rather than to a prosaic system of days and months and, moreover, contributes a section (Appendix 1) on 'The Kalendar', it might have been helpful to mention C. R. Cheney's invaluable *Handbook of Dates*, which offers an easy and effective means of summoning up a calendar for any particular year. The *Handbook* also provides a lengthy list of festivals and saints' days with many references to sources and hence local usage.

In reading the work under review historians will sometimes be conscious of a missing dimension. Thus, when the author remarks that Sarum missals preserve the ceremony of reconciliation of penitents on Maundy Thursday 'even in the late middle ages' (p. 257), he betrays a lack of awareness of the evidence for its performance at that time. For instance, Bishop Trillek of Hereford in the mid-fourteenth century commissioned his penitencer to expel penitents of the archdeaconry of Salop from Ludlow parish church on Ash Wednesday and then to receive them back for absolution on Maundy Thursday (*officium eiusdem diei salubriter exercendum*). Moreover, throughout the later middle ages chantry and other foundations provide a great deal of information about liturgical practice which would merit acknowledgement. One might also wish to solicit the author's comment on the bequest (1497) by the bishop of Norwich, James Goldwell, to the canons of St. Gregory's priory, Canterbury, of an antiphonary to complete their set—they having three already. This from the summary of Goldwell's will by the Norfolk antiquary, Francis Blomefield. But, of course, we should not expect too much of someone whose sights are firmly fixed elsewhere.

The publishers must be congratulated on a well turned out volume, which betrays few errors. The reviewer did notice 'episcopos puerorum' (p. 177), 'Sempiterns Deus' (p. 254), 'in inclusion' (p. 309), and 'Reinald L.

Poole' (p. 387), but these are insignificant blemishes in a complex production. The numbering of sections within each chapter rather than consecutively throughout the book seems a little idiosyncratic and took some getting used to. The tables are well presented, but the reproduction of some of the manuscript folios is on rather too small a scale for detailed examination.

Medievalists, both those with appropriate expertise and those whose interests are less specialised, will find much to praise in this scholarly book, above all they are likely to welcome the author's painstaking work of analysis and categorisation over a wide range of liturgical manuscripts.

Dalhousie University

Roy Martin Haines

***Sagacity.* By Janet Hamilton. House of Anansi. \$7.95, paper.**

Janet Hamilton's first venture into fiction earns the generic tag "novel" in the radical, eighteenth-century sense of that word: it is remarkably timeless and genre-free. *Sagacity* presents a fictional world which straddles more than one century without ever being quite of its own. Using the trappings of historical fiction, Hamilton creates a scenario which is stubbornly ahistorical. Her characters, most of them nameless, are variously afflicted with sensibilities ranging from baroque wit to post-modern anxiety. They participate in a narrative which they need to interpret as history and chronicle, but which Hamilton renders as obscure and chronologically unhinged. Thoroughly ambitious in design and meaning, *Sagacity* is that rare piece of fiction which is both radically experimental and remarkably achieved.

Part of Hamilton's achievement is reflected in the formal symmetry of her narrative. The heroine of *Sagacity* is identified simply as "the Queen": she is both the structural and imaginative center of the novel. While most of the other characters are designated in relation to the Queen—the "Queen's sister," the "Queen's mother," etc. —the novel presents the Queen's emotional crisis as a climax of her ancestral past.

The narrative thus begins *in medias res* with the Consort's successful attempt to push the Queen down the stairs. Provoked by the Queen's characteristic disregard of her husband, the event provides an axis for the story: the Queen has been looking for the ghost of her father, while the father continues, after death, to wander in search of his sleeping daughter:

They all believed, including the Consort, that the Queen left her bed to find her dead father—he might be moving through the halls still, coming to his children, bending over one then the other, telling them all that they would have to know and do when they were he and he was somebody happier. (44)

Hamilton's syntactic nuance weights the moment with historical resonance and suggests that Queen's sleepwalking is a compulsive repetition of her father's.

The Consort's plea for attention meanwhile ignored, the tumble downstairs becomes the trigger for an inverted analogue of genesis. The Queen is lifted up "sobbing and asleep" (60) and is put to bed, looking "bruised, as if only just born" (43). The Consort stands outside her room "for six days," waiting for some sign of acknowledgement; on "the seventh day . . . he turned from her door and went toward his' (61).

From this moment the action of the novel extends both backward and forward in time. As Hamilton sketches the lineage of both the Queen and the Consort, the reader discovers that the two families, so publicly disparate, harbour private histories which are strangely parallel. At the same time, the Queen's mother undertakes the education of her grandson—a treacherous process which necessitates the sacrifice of the boy to his grandmother's idea of "the invisible and potent force which is creating the future" (110). At the conclusion of the penultimate chapter, Hamilton thus presents the first and last acts of royal history in a startling juxtaposition which conflates the birth and death of a possibly inauthentic line. Dreaming of "the great levelling up and the great levelling down" (111), the Queen's mother murders her grandson and coincidentally recalls the "horrible story" of her husband's birth—a birth which, for the perpetually ambitious mother, now suggests a royal death, since her memory of the story brings into question the whole problem of legitimacy.

This brief outline of the formal aspects of *Sagacity* fails to suggest Hamilton's generous sense of humour and play. Throughout the novel the reader witnesses a subtle struggle between satire and a more humane comedy. *Sagacity* is a witty novel which finally exposes the inadequacies of wit. The process of reading Hamilton is not unlike that of reading George Meredith's best fiction¹ or watching the comedies of Eric Rohmer. The reader initially feels that the novelist has paid him the "supreme compliment" of being "civilized"—to use Virginia Woolf's famous and somewhat short-sighted encomium on Meredith. Indeed, Hamilton's subtle and complex syntax, which perfectly mirrors her characters' indulgence in a strained and analytical wit, has a seductively civilizing effect upon her reader. The final butt of Hamilton's joke is, however, the complacency inherent in a civilized superiority.

To understand Hamilton's joke about wit and the civilizing process is to understand *Sagacity* as a novel about disappointment—about the painful disjunction between the desire for intimacy and the unerring choice of the wrong confessor. The Queen is an example of someone who is what she wears: her public image has blocked all access to private or intimate knowledge. She is also the chronic victim of missed connections. When she is a child, her father is a potential source of intimacy, but his sleeping habits complicate contingency:

The Queen's father would visit his two small daughters as they slept. . . . he would look up, look into and around the dark room, and utter his sadnesses. His view of the tragedy was not, in his middle life, complicated. "I am all alone," he would say. . . . His daughters, sleeping, would moan . . . waking, asking "What? What?" then fall back, patting their own cheeks. The next day, frantic, the sisters would look for their father in the halls, they would ask him questions, nattering about birds' wings and stars and who was right. And if he was not past it, he might mutter, "I'll think about it," and that night, the answers his excuse, come to them again. (89).

This passage is particularly poignant because it demonstrates concisely the circular and self-perpetuating process by which intimacy is narrowly avoided.

As an adult, the Queen decides to enlist a friend. She makes three choices: each pretends to the position of analyst/confessor, and each is entirely inadequate to the demands of friendship. The Queen's sister makes herself available for "modern" discussions on sex, marriage, and duty. When her mother murders her nephew, she decides that the best therapy is "to have everyone experience it" (116). Sir Francis Bond Head is the Queen's nocturnal choice. Claiming to be "three hundred years old and dying" (71), Sir Francis is summoned from his bed each night, thus becoming a substitute for the Queen's father. When he arrives in the Queen's chamber, the two sit "one behind the other, like passengers on a train" (76): intimacy is contingent upon the simulation of solitude.

Of the Queen's three choices, Mrs. Jameson is the most disastrous. Mrs. Jameson is an analyst manqué—by profession a writer of mystery novels, but by avocation a hack sleuth in search of the mysteries lurking behind "the moral world." Having "read widely" and "once been a source only of the theoretical" (33), she becomes a model teacher of the art of wit and over-muscular thought. The Queen, a willing student, learns how to satirize each member of her family. Making a reasonable and sympathetic observation about her sister's husband—an observation which she, eager to please her teacher, mistakenly calls a "literary idea"—the Queen receives a reprimand from Mrs. Jameson, who says she "had reached too far for the consoling connection, that she suffered delusions of reference" (32).

The example of Mrs. Jameson embodies Hamilton's idea that, in matters of intimacy, the most objective choices are usually the wrong ones. The Queen selects Mrs. Jameson for a friend because Mrs. Jameson is outside the family circle: she is impartial, aloof, and, finally, capable of the most brutal condescensions. The Consort, to whom his wife has given little thought, is meanwhile confined to his room, waiting for the simplest acknowledgement of a conjugal connection.

Hamilton terminates the friendship between the two women with a remarkable paragraph which explains the Queen's distrust of "talking too much":

The Queen recalled discussing with her father the first serious book she had ever read. She asked if he thought the view of man as good only through the constraint of social necessity was justified. Her father hardly noticed she had spoken, but said, finally, that the proof lay all around that sex was becoming less and less important to all mankind, and so, she was luckier than he. The conversation was the beginning of the Queen's feeling that she had nothing to say about anything. She thought later that she had been trying, not to make a point, but to win his heart. (47)

The non sequitur which silences the Queen so effectively is a perfect analogue of those later conversations with her friend. Both the Queen and the reader thus escape complete dominance by Mrs. Jameson in much the same way: at certain apparently crucial moments it is simply impossible to understand what Mrs. Jameson is getting at. More significantly, the Queen becomes exhausted by the effort and meaninglessness involved in "making points."

In the final pages of *Sagacity* a kingdom quickly crumbles: the Queen's mother murders the heir, and the Queen loses Sir Francis (to a new wife) and Mrs. Jameson (to the colony). In place of this overwhelming public loss, however, the genesis of a private relationship is made possible. The Queen, finally hearing the screams of her husband, glides down the hall and approaches the bedroom door:

Someone opened his door then closed it. The Queen was swallowed in. Her entrance and her leaving unrecorded, and no one could remember a moment after where she was or had gone, and no one wished to be able to say for sure, and no tales could be told, no tales were ever told, and no one ever felt they saw with certainty. Whoever opened the door closed the story's meaning, and they had history's job. (130)

The Queen has now found the "consoling connection." Acting impulsively and without self-consciousness, she allows herself to be "swallowed" by a private moment—a moment which is invisible to the scrutiny of public record.

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NOTE

1. My reading of Meredith, as a point of comparison with Hamilton, is largely influenced by Judith Wilt's excellent study, *The Readable People of George Meredith*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975.

***The Inner Journey of the Poet.* By Kathleen Raine, ed. by Brian Keeble. George Braziller. \$20.**

The book is well-named; it is an inner journey of the distinguished English author into her own well-springs as a poet. Through eleven essays, originally given as lectures on various honoured occasions, Kathleen Raine leads us into a scholarly world deeply imbued with spiritual insight. A devotee of the arts, she values tradition, imagination and inspiration. A Platonist, she defends a view of poetry and the other arts as the chief means by which we relate to the timeless, universal mind, and of the poet as a sacred being divinely inspired. She follows that philosophical line of thought to Dante, Blake and Yeats, a trinity whose works are based on "the divine principle, the fountain of Good, the beautiful and the holy." It is a succession reaching from Plotinus (2nd Century B.C.) to Jewish, Christian and Islam theology and incorporated in Hinduism, Buddhism and Sufism - all of them, spiritual efforts to transform reality into a *mundus imaginalis* because it is only there that the soul can be found, man's true psyche being a universal self attuned to an invisible world revealed through his culture, whether primitive, Chaldean, Florentine, Gothic or Vedanta. Each gives evidence that man is not "a worm of sixty winters... seventy inches long... born in a night to perish in a night." (Blake)

As Dr. Raine makes clear, the creative imagination depends on myths, primordial images and archetypal figures, be they Hellenic or Gnostic, of gods or demons, and diverse as Milton's Satan, Shelley's Prometheus, Yeats's Cuchlain. When works of art are true to the archetype, "we discover our own laws, our own inner order... Without such works, human society must suffer the kind of moral and spiritual sickness so prevalent at the present time." The author points to modern music and modern art images as destructive to the psyche; a profane environment dislocates it. Obviously, she disagrees with poets like Auden who considered it his duty to be politically engaged. She maintains that a culture whose premises are spiritual provides us with interpreters like Paracelsus, Jakob Boehme, Swedenborg and Jung, while a materialistic culture gives us Bacon, Newton, Descartes and Locke. The first school inspires works like Yeats's "Sailing to Byzantium" with its "monuments of unageing intellect," a metaphysical record of the soul's self knowledge; whereas the positivist, atheist, Freudian outlook produces works that are obscene, perverted and nihilistic, so that "Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world/ The blood-dimmed tide is loosed."

Unlike academics, says Dr. Raine, poets turn to works by philosophers like Gaston Bachelard, Ananda Coomaraswamy and Teilhard de Chardin for use as textbooks in the teaching of creative writing because students need to know the premises and sources that nourish and sustain creativity. She believes a visionary *anima mundi* is needed, one related to folklore, archaeology, magic and dreams. Although she realizes how alien such thoughts are today, she argues that "current ideologies, notably Marxism,

assume that our humanity belongs totally to the outer world... that we are economic and social beings only," thereby neglecting the other half of life that has its secret and inviolable sanctuaries, regions of contemplation "we can and do inhabit, however circumscribed our outer conditions may be."

Her argument is richly supported with quotations and examples. Dante's journey is shown to be an allegorical self-exploration, as he flees from the forest of life and the terrifying beast within it, and is guided by ancient wisdom, personified by Virgil, through man's spiritual hell and purgatory into paradise. In the case of Hopkins, the approach to poetry is shown to be not an escape from, but an inscape into nature, where everything reflects a literally living God. To him the Parmenidean "It is" becomes the Biblical "I am." And how the nouns, adjectives, verbs pile up in adoration: "I caught this morning morning's minion, king-dom of daylight's Dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon..." In Keats, the author finds the poet of youth, who also went to Plato's Garden of the Muses and was also influenced by Plotinus's "Concerning the Beautiful," in which Beauty is the Good (Keats's Truth), not by way of reason but through the senses. "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard / Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on; / Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd, / Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone." For only in the archetypal world, insists the author, does beauty exist in its pristine, virginal form. In contrast to a modern poet like T. S. Eliot, who bases his work on historical traditions that are Catholic, Royalist and Classical, and shows us the wasteland in which we live, she upholds poets like Edwin Muir, Dylan Thomas, David Gascoyne, who represent the Romantic, Protestant and Democratic traditions, and show us "a timeless region that lies beyond the reach of intellectual judgements and evaluations." As do David Jones, a Welsh artist-writer, and Cecil Collins, a Cornish artist; the one, dealing with an inner landscape inhabited by Fools, Angels and the Soul; the other, with symbols and images of Paradise; both, in fairy tale ways of inlooking.

But it is to Blake the author is drawn most of all. It is his mystical, supernatural world that fulfills her expectations and demands for universal harmony and holy order. Biblical and prophetic spokesman that Blake is, with his "divine principle, creative power of the Imagination, and a life filled with bliss, energy and desire," it is he who exemplifies the glory of the natural world, one that "is alive within the imaginative experience of everyone who is awake to its awareness." Blake, who could see the sunrise not as a ball of fire but as a host of angels singing God's praises, could say the materialist is one "who publishes doubt and calls it knowledge, whose Science is Despair," who will charge "Visionaries with deceiving / And call Men wise for not Believing."

As for the modern sciences, Dr. Raine considers them "pathetic and futile attempts to discover a lost holy land that Blake saw whenever he saw the sun rise, or a hawthorn tree in blossom."

It would be interesting to apply Dr. Raine's criteria to the American literary scene and to supply equally convincing examples of those with a materialist outlook vs. those with a spiritual inlook. Perhaps it is time for such an American journey into poetry. We have here an excellent model.

San Diego

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